

GALATIANS 2
Salvation of Paul by Grace
Galatians 1:10-16
By Ron Harvey

INTRODUCTION

Now the book of Galatians is addressing an issue that had arisen in many of the churches which Paul had founded on his second and third missionary journey. When Paul first went through the towns of Galatia, preaching the gospel, they gladly received the free gospel of Jesus Christ. Gentiles were happy to hear that there was salvation for them through Christ. And furthermore, this salvation was available by pure grace. Paul put no Jewish restrictions on them. They did not have to become a Jew to be saved. They did not have to conform to the requirements of that old Jewish religion. Salvation was not by the keeping of that old Jewish law, but was by faith in Christ alone.

What a wonderful and free gospel that is! Once Christ has come and has made that one acceptable sacrifice, God does not then require us to perform those old typical ceremonies. God does not require us to join that worn out religion of Judaism. God does not require us to bring lambs for slaughter. God does not require us to obey every jot and tittle of the Hebrew law for salvation.

When the Savior of the world came and died as that one true sacrifice for sins, he offered salvation by pure and simple faith. Jesus preached that salvation was not after all by the Jewish law. It was not by being a descendent of Abraham. It was not by circumcision. It was not by works. But it was by believing.

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

Now, when Paul first marched through the cities of Galatia with this gospel, many accepted the free offer of salvation by faith alone. But after Paul left, teachers came in and led many astray by teaching that Christianity is not by faith alone, but rather, it is faith in Christ plus the requirements of Judaism. They were preaching that it is not sufficient to simply believe in Christ but that it was necessary also to continue in those old ceremonies of Judaism. Specifically, they said that it was necessary to

believe in Jesus and to be circumcised.

But look what Paul says about that.

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

Galatians 5:2

That is, there is no profit in circumcision any longer. It had its purpose and it had its usefulness as a sign of Jewishness. But it is not useful unto salvation.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

Galatians 6:15

And so, that is the issue of Galatians. These Judaizing teachers took as it were the pure water of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and they put a drop of Judaism in it. And this drop of Judaism permeated the whole glass and tainted the water. And it was no longer the pure gospel. But it was another religion all together.

Now Paul is absolutely angry that these Jewish teachers are leading the churches astray.

1. He marvels that the churches have removed from the gospel. (v.6)
2. He marvels that they have removed so soon. (v.6)
3. He is angry that they have left the grace of Christ for something else which is called another gospel. (v.6)
4. It is not really another gospel, for there is only one gospel. (v.7)
5. Paul says they are troubling you. (v.7)
6. Paul says they are perverting the gospel. (v.7)
7. Paul pronounces a curse on anyone who would add obligations to the pure gospel. (v.8).
 - a. We. Paul and the other apostles.
 - b. An angel from heaven.

That is how valuable and crucial the pure gospel is. Anyone who would pervert it is to be cursed.

Now, who is right, Paul or the Jewish teachers?

- I. Paul says, "I am an apostle." (v.1)
 - A. I am a full fledged apostle, just like the other twelve.

Paul is not a baby apostle.
Paul is not an apostle of lesser authority.
 - B. Paul did not receive his apostleship passed down through the other apostles.

Not of men, neither by man.
 - C. Paul received his apostleship directly from Jesus Christ. (v.1)

- II. Paul is not a man pleaser. (v.10)

Paul is probably inferring that the Jewish teachers are trying to please men. The Jewish teachers are trying to reconcile two forms of religion which will please both the Gentiles and the Jews. And so, they are trying to make the Gentiles obey the rite of circumcision in order to please the Jewish elders back in Jerusalem.

It is those teachers who are trying to be man pleasers. Paul is only trying to please God and this is his only concern.

So, Paul says, if you are trying to decide who to believe, you better consider my motives and the motives of the teachers. Make your decision based on who is trying to please God and who is trying to please men.

- III. Paul's gospel is authorized by Jesus Christ alone. (v.12)

Paul says, "Look, all I can tell you is that the gospel that I am preaching to you came directly from Jesus Christ.

- A. Negatively. It did not come from man. This is not a man-originated message. Furthermore, it is not something that Paul learned from any man. He didn't learn this from Gamaliel. He didn't learn this from Peter or any of the other apostles.

B. Positively. Paul learned it by revelation of Jesus Christ.

Now, Paul simply says he learned the gospel by revelation of Jesus Christ. When God communicates truth directly to a man, we use the term revelation. Revelation is direct communication between God and man.

God communicated to prophets in the Old Testament by revelation. (Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and several others.)

God communicated to the apostles in the New Testament by revelation.

Now the only way that we know anything about God is if God reveals himself to us. And God reveals himself to us in general terms through his creation. We call that his general revelation. But God has communicated himself in very specific terms in the past by supernatural revelation. He has spoken in words directly to men.

And Paul is saying, God has spoken to me. And the gospel that I am preaching to you is the very gospel that was taught to me by Jesus Christ.

Note: Now we would like for Paul to go into more detail about how God spoke to him.

1. How many times?
2. Did Jesus come visit with Paul in his home or in a cave?
3. Did he take notes when Jesus taught him?
4. Did Jesus come every day?
5. What did Jesus look like?
6. Did you see the nail prints in his hands and feet.

But we just aren't told these details. But what Paul does tell us in his writings is the message that Jesus taught him. And specifically here in Galatians, Paul says that Jesus taught him the gospel. And this gospel is that Gentiles can be saved as well as Jews by pure faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other requirement for salvation. Salvation is not found by Jewish rituals in any way. And Christ taught this to Paul by revelation.

Now you remember that after Paul was saved, he left Damascus and he did not go directly to Jerusalem. (v.17)

- The Jewish elders in Jerusalem were probably waiting on Paul to return with Christians in tow. And it might have been supposed that Paul would return to Jerusalem with some report to the Jews about his business in Damascus.
- After his conversion, you might suppose that Paul would immediately seek out the other apostles in Jerusalem.

But, the providence of God kept Paul away from Jerusalem so that no one could say that he received his message from men.

- Paul went into Arabia after his conversion.

This is presumably where Paul received his instruction in the gospel of Christ. Christ took Paul by the hand and led him into the desert and there Paul got his Bible training in the gospel.

Now it doesn't say how long Paul was in Arabia. But it seems that it was nearly three years. (v.18) And if Paul was instructed by Christ himself for three years, then never did any man have such a doctoral degree in religion.

How would you like to have been taught the doctrines of grace by Jesus himself?

How would you like to have been instructed about the nature of the atonement by the One who was the atonement for sins?

How would you like to have been instructed about the church by the Head of the Church.

How would you like to have been instructed about the second coming by the One who is coming again?

About the final judgment by the One who is the final Judge?

Paul was already fully taught in the Jewish religion. And now, he was taught in the Christian religion. And he was taught by the One who is the object and the sum and substance of both religions.

We don't know how many years Paul was instructed. Perhaps Jesus continued to teach him and to communicate with him for the rest of his life. One thing we do know. Paul learned the gospel from the Savior himself. We know from Romans that Jesus taught Paul about propitiation and about substitutionary atonement. He taught Paul about the depravity of man. He taught Paul about the federal headship of Adam and how all of Adam's descendants inherited Adam's guilt. And Jesus taught Paul that he also was head over a people – the people of God – the elect from the foundation of the world.

Paul very well may have had a 17 year education from Christ himself. For it says in verse 18 that he didn't go to Jerusalem for three years. Then in 2:1, it was another 14 years before he went to Jerusalem again to begin his missionary ministry.

And during all of this time, Paul learned that the gospel is that sinners are saved by faith in Christ alone. There can be nothing added to that message without destroying the message. Salvation by faith alone is a grace kind of salvation. And it is the only kind of salvation.

And Paul says to the Galatians,

I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. (v.12)

Now in verses 13-15 we are going to see that,

The very conversion of Paul teaches us that salvation is by pure grace (vs.13-15)

It is fitting that the conversion of Saul of Tarsus was perhaps the clearest example of the sovereign grace of God in all the Bible. The man who would eventually be the greatest sovereign grace preacher of all time, was himself the greatest example of salvation by God's sovereign grace.

- I. Consider who Saul was before his conversion.
 - A. He was a devout practitioner in the Jews' religion. (v.13)
 - B. He was famous in the Jews' religion. (You have heard.)
 - C. He had advanced above many in his own age category. (v.14)

- D. He was exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers. (v.14)
- E. He persecuted the church of God and wasted it. (v.13)
 - 1. He persecuted the church beyond measure. It could not be measured. You couldn't count the people that he killed or imprisoned. He was relentless.

Acts 9:1: He slaughtered Christians.
Acts 8:3: He made havoc of the church.
 - 2. Paul voted to have Stephen killed in Acts 8:1. He was consenting to his death.
 - 3. Paul stood there and watched gleefully as another Christian was stoned to death.

2. Saul was the least likely candidate for salvation of any man on earth. He hated Christ. He was a religious fanatic in Judaism. He was a murderous zealot. He was drunk with the thrill of killing. He killed men and women who professed the name of Jesus.

I tell you that if salvation were up to us, we would never have chosen Saul to be saved. We would have thought Pontius Pilate more of a candidate than Saul. At least Pilate really didn't want to send Jesus to the cross. Pilate was caught by the pressure of the people. But Saul was a much more vicious killer. And given the choice we would have thought Pilate the better candidate for salvation.

All you can say about Saul is that he was utterly lost. And he was headed to Damascus with a murderous intent in his heart. There is no way that this man could ever be saved.

But God says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy."

And look at the very next word in verse 15!

BUT.

This is the biggest little three letter word in the whole Bible. There

was no hope whatsoever for this man. He was the enemy of God. He was the sinner of all sinners. He was dead in trespasses and sins.

When you ask many people to give their testimony, they will most often start off with the word I. They will tell you, “I said a prayer” or “I made a decision” or “I committed my life to Christ” or “I did this or that.” And that is all they perceive about their salvation.

But Paul says, “But when it pleased God.” (v.15)

You see, the salvation of Saul is the greatest example of salvation by grace. Saul was riding fast to Damascus to persecute Christians and that was when it pleased God to reveal his Son in Saul.

Suddenly Saul saw a great light. In the middle of the day, he saw this blinding light. And then, he heard a voice. And the voice said, “Saul, Saul, Why persecutes thou me?”

And so we see in the case of Saul, the stark reality of salvation. It is pure grace whereby God comes to the sinner and makes Himself known.

- Saul was saved when it pleased God. (v.15) Saul wasn't saved when Saul got ready. Saul was saved when God was ready.

Too many people think that they hold God in their hands and that they control when they will be saved. Not so. God dictates the times and the seasons of grace. Since salvation is his work, he will do it at his time. And this was Saul's time.

- God set Saul aside from his mother's womb. (v.15)

Now, God didn't convert Saul at birth. He didn't convey saving grace at birth. But he set him aside at birth. The providence of God was at work in the life of Saul from the very moment that he was born. Since God had a saving plan for Saul, God set him aside from the womb. God's plan was ultimately to make Saul a beacon of grace. And so, God shepherded Saul all along the road of life. Saul killed many people and Saul could have been killed himself along the way. But, not so, for God had set him aside from his mother's womb.

And then,

- God called Saul by his grace. (v.15)

This is the effectual call whereby God makes the sinner come. No force in all the universe could make Saul worship Jesus. That is, no force except the sovereign grace of God.

Now if I call you and ask you to come to my house, you may or may not come. But if the King calls you, then you will come one way or another. If you won't come willingly then he will come and get you.

When God calls you to salvation – you are coming. And you are coming by his sovereign power.

Saul began to learn about sovereign election when he was on the road to Damascus.

Acts 22:6-10.

And Annanias was told to go see Saul, because Saul was a chosen vessel. (Acts 9:15)

Paul became the great champion of the doctrine of election. And he understood election in a very personal way because he knew it wasn't he that first chose God but God who chose him. It was not so much Saul that apprehended God, but God that apprehended Saul on that day.

Jesus Christ stopped Saul that day and blinded him and knocked him to the ground and arrested him. And Saul was a bond servant of Jesus Christ for the rest of his life.

That is why Paul says, "But when it pleased God to reveal his Son in me."

Some people think that election is the most horrible doctrine. And they hate anyone who dares to preach it. But I guarantee you one thing, Paul didn't hate it. Paul knew that except for the electing grace of God and except for God setting him aside from his mother's womb and except for the effective grace that drew him to Christ and changed his heart, he was a doomed man on his way to hell.

I'll tell you who else believes in election – missionaries who spend a lifetime in the backwoods somewhere trying to win a few souls to Christ. They come to see very quickly that election and the effective call of God upon the soul is the only hope of changing the hearts of depraved men. Were it not for the awesome power of God, all of their efforts would be in vain.

Even for preachers in civilized areas, election is the greatest encouragement of all. The preacher knows that the gospel will call out the sheep and the sheep will hear the gospel call.

Concluding Points

Obviously, in chapter one, the central question is, “What is the gospel?” Paul says one thing and the Judaizers say another. And the answer to the question is eternal life or eternal death.

1. The gospel of Christ is an important gospel. The most important thing you can do in all your life is to figure out what the gospel is.

There are many gospels out there. But there is one true gospel. I would suggest that the churches of Memphis are not much different than the churches of Galatia. And there are teachers who are teaching something other than the gospel of Christ. And people better find a church that preaches the gospel or they will find themselves an outcast on that final day.

It is the pure gospel of Christ that saves. It is the pure gospel that changes hearts. It is the pure gospel that sanctifies. And there are people by the thousands who are sitting in churches everywhere who never hear the pure gospel of Christ.

2. The gospel of Christ is a humiliating gospel.

This is why the gospel is rejected universally. The gospel declares man to be nothing and God to be everything in salvation. The Bible declares what man does not want to hear – that he is lost and undone; that he is unable to save himself; that he is utterly dependant on the grace of God to save him.

The gospel is 180 degrees contrary to human thinking. The world tries to tell you that you can somehow save yourself. But the gospel says, "No you can't." The world tries to tell you that you have self-worth. The gospel says, "You are saved by Christ's worth."

The world tells you that you hold Jesus in your hands and you can do with him what you please. But the gospel says, "He has you in his hands and he can do with you as he pleases."

If the gospel is right, then we better cry out to the One who has our destiny in His hands. He is a sovereign God and he can do with us as He pleases.

I don't know why people hate the doctrine of election so fiercely. It seems to be a wonderful and blessed doctrine to me. It is found everywhere in the Bible. I suppose men hate it because it takes every bit of boasting away and gives every bit of credit to God for salvation.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude with a little story that illustrates election.

There was a bride and a groom who were pronounced man and wife. And they got into the car to leave on their honeymoon. As they were leaving, the Husband said to his bride, "I have a confession to make. The first time I ever laid eyes on you I fell in love with you and I knew I had to have you. You didn't know me then, but I knew you.

Do you remember as a young girl you were sick and you needed an operation? And you received money in the mail to pay for it. That was me that sent it.

And do you remember receiving cards in the mail from a secret admirer? That was me that sent them.

I knew from the very beginning that I loved you and I did everything I could to make you mine.

Now what bride is going to hate her husband for first loving her in this way. Why she would think that was the most romantic thing of all time.

And from the moment Christ first set his eyes on you from all eternity, he chose to win your love and affection. He chose to do whatever was necessary to make you his.

You never knew until he had made you his. But now, after you are wedded to him, you learn about his electing love for you.

Are you going to get angry because he chose to love you? Or are you in love with him all the more for loving you first?